



December 8, 2006

Dear Miners, Mine Operators, and Stakeholders:

The upcoming holidays are a special time to be with family, friends, and loved ones. That is why there is no better time than now to focus on working safely at your mining operations.

We all know that mining is a complex profession and preoccupation with holiday distractions can lead to unnecessary accidents or tragedies. Serious hazards still exist, so it is more important than ever not to let our guard down and compromise safety.

I am asking you and your fellow miners to re-emphasize safety and health issues as frequently as possible during this holiday season. The following steps are a solid foundation to promote safety during the holidays:

- Maintain your focus in the work environment. Use a risk assessment and management process such as SLAM (Stop-Look-Analyze-Manage) and SMART (Stop-Measure-Act-Review-Train) to safely approach all tasks and follow the appropriate steps in each work assignment.
- Use all appropriate personal protective equipment. Take the needed steps to protect yourselves at all times by using the proper protective equipment.
- Conduct thorough pre-operational checks to ensure equipment is properly maintained and in good operating condition.
- Reduce the effect of winter at your mine site. Conduct thorough mine and equipment examinations; apply sand or salt to icy surfaces; watch for highwall freeze and thaw effects; and ensure proper ventilation in confined spaces and underground mining environments.

Along with the holidays, there are also distractions unique to this time of year that deserve increased attention from everyone:

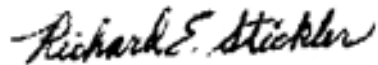
- holiday travel planning that can divert attention from work activities in anticipation of family events and gatherings;
- celebrations that can lead to excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages, resulting in impaired driving or even impaired work; and
- fatigue from travel or celebration that can make it difficult for workers to concentrate on important and complicated tasks.

Please make it a top priority to keep your fellow miners focused on safety during the holiday season—both at and away from work. Take the time to remind them that it is important to stay focused on their work at the mine—concentrating on safety first can save their lives and those of their coworkers.

Thank you for your efforts to help keep our nation's miners safe during this special time of year.

On behalf of the entire MSHA family, I wish you safe and happy holidays.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard E. Stickler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard Stickler
Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health